

EXTRA! FCC bows to White House pressure Re-exempts Reflags. Two reflags sail without R/O. "Bridgeton" hits mine. White House says: "Quick give us R/O's."

COPYRIGHT (C) 1987 by THE PROFESSIONAL MARINE COMMUNICATOR.

Administrative sources seemingly changed their minds July 25, 1987 when David Ring (your editor) received a call from Captain Robert Lowen, the president of Masters Mates and Pilots (MM&P) enquiring if he wanted to have a job one of the new reflagged Kuwaiti tankers. Capt. Lowen explained that the Mr. Lovell, the personnel director of Gleneagle, the ship management company which runs the ships, "will have nothing to do with the ARA or the ROU" Captain Lowen said that there were two R/O positions available, and that the R/O could be either a member of the ARA, or the MM&P.

The total pay which includes base pay, bonus in lieu of overtime, vacation etc. is \$154. per diem. Captain Lowen said that War Zone pay would be paid, but was not clear as to the conditions. The ships in question are manned by a U.S. master, the remainder of the crew being Scandinavian and Phillipino.

According to other sources, the foreigners are receiving triple pay for the Persian Gulf. These same sources say further that the reason for GlennEagle's not wishing to obtain Radio Officers from the ARA or ROU is because these unions fought bitterly over having a R/O onboard.

The ARA was unable to ship a man to the Gas Prince, the first of the reflagged vessels to require a R/O, but the ROU was able to fill the post at even this admittedly low pay because the surplus of R/O's has left some men anxious to obtain sufficient time to get full credit for pension benefits.

By comparison, a coast station operator would receive an average daily rate of \$126. per day for standing the equivalent time of a week's watch at sea (56 hours per week) assuming \$13.00 per hour for 40 hours (\$520) plus weekend overtime of 16 hours (\$364.), this of course does not compensate the man for time away from home and additional hours spent working.

WNU gets upgrade for SITOR and HF antennas.

According to Mr. Marvin Gutgin, TRT's National Chief of Marine Sales, TRT's Pearl River, LA radio station will be receiving new Harris 5,000 watt amplifiers, new directive arrays from Mosely Electronics and new SITOR units from HAL electronics. Mr. Gutgin says the aim is to make "Slidell Radio a major station instead of one being perceived as one serving the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean and Southwest North Atlantic. Our main target will be the North Atlantic area." Mr. Gutgin wishes that TRT would re-open WAX in Ojus, Florida as that location would provide better coverage for both Gulf of Mexico and North Atlantic areas

D-2 R/O negotiates his own rate: Company pays \$300/day. COPYRIGHT 1987- PROCOMM.

According to a copy of a letter received by PROCOMM, Mr. Carl Engh has negotiated his own pay of \$300/per day with Seahawk Management of Houston, Texas. In the letter dated April 16, 1987, Mr. Thomas N. Lightsey, of SEAHAWK agrees to pay Mr. Engh a "flat \$300 per day; there will be no union contributions, no vacation pay, no overtime pay, no insurance/health benefits other than those afforded American seamen by United States law, nor any other payments of any kind." Mr. Engh's length of employment was to be a minimum of 90 days.

Open letter from Carl Engh to all R/O's: Let's

stop getting ***** [exploited - Ed.] by all the shipping companies and the unions including the so-called independent associations which are in collusion with them. At least for the time being our presence is essential to the operation at sea of their vessels. Why be grossly underpaid? Generally, with rare exceptions, the wage structure with almost every shipping company is abominable insoror as the present economic prevailing conditions of mid-year 1987. Never mind any of the foolish attempts at rationalization by the unions and shipping companies equating our pay scale to some arbitrary comparable rating of a mate or engineer. Admittedly, their pay may be substandard, but let's not automatically be compelled to be included or to share their particular misfortune with us. Afterall, we are neither mates or engineers, who apparently seem to be in abundant supply.

On the average, I receive one telephone call per week from the UNION CONTRACTED COMPANIES [emphasis in original - Ed.] Frantically requiring an R/O. One vessel on MSC charter stayed at the dock in Japan recently, because there was no R/O. The vessel I am currently aboard had to go to Norfolk via the C & D Canal and the Chesapeake Bay from Philadelphia because the R/O, after giving more than adequate notice, left. Needless to say there is a continuing critical shortage of radio officers throughout the Maritime Industry. I am proposing with your participation, to form an employees' service corporation to supply radio officers when needed to any shipping company at a specified daily rate. This rate will include an excellent wage for the R/O in addition to corporate stock and profit sharing. At your option such employment could supplement regular employment that you have instead of replacing it. With best regards and looking forward to hearing from you, I am.

Uy 73,

CARL ENGH
2502 Little River Rd.
Haymarket, VA 22069

R/O benefits on MEBA D-2 manned MSC ships not the same as other officers.

According to a copy of the Official Contract manual for the "PFC JAMES ANDERSON JR.", the benefits contribution for a R/O is \$1816.55 per month. This rate is below the contribution \$1838.90 monthly rate for 3rd Mates and 3rd Engineers. According to PROCOMM's source, the U.S. Government is billed for 125% of shipboard employee's base pay for overtime, yet the overtime actually paid to the crewmember was consistently less than 100% of base pay. According to our source, Maersk billed 125% to the government.

NOTES FROM THE OZONE LAYER...

The following information is sent in to PROCOMM by its readers.

PROCOMM in no way warrants the accuracy of the following information.

If you wish to submit information and have your name withheld, please tell us. We need your information.

Six Months all at sea?

"Many thanks for the PROCOMM newsletters as you know, MEBA-D2 has a main goal of dumping Radio Officers from the ships. They scramble for RO's to man the ships, and then the Union Officers undercut the salaries, benefits, and imply RO's are useless!! I have met several ex- MEBA-2 RO's who bailed out and went to ROU, ARA, to non-union jobs (Arco, Exxon etc.). They are the smart ones. Two apprentices that put their time in on MEBA D-2 left the union as it was obvious to them MEBA D-2 was not standing up for them. One of the apprentices sent in his discharge to the FCC - he was told that all 180 days must actually be spent at sea. [The FCC has reportedly been giving all applicants for 6 months endorsement a difficult time. Ed.] Keep up the good work. 73, QM.

RTTY tips! Sheldon Bowling, R/O on the SS ARCO CALIFORNIA/WMCU writes in and offers some RTTY tips. He says he uses an ICOM-751, a TONO EXL-5000 Keyboard terminal, microline 480 Printer and a Dymek DA1000 Active receive antenna. (Sometimes he uses a Infotech 600 terminal.) "I choose the ICOM because of the built-in power supply and small size, while the EXL-5000 has a built in monitor (I don't carry the keyboard with me.) I copy all traffic lists, weather, press and stock market reports with it. I copy NOJ RTTY 100 WPM 74.4 baud on 2688, 4332, 6423, 8457, and 12698 KHz. I copy WLO at random times from 1400-0115. They generally come on with the PX after the WX they send at 2330 Z. 8715, 8707, and 13083.5 KHz. KPH has press (ARQ) 13077.5, 13097.5 & 8711 KHz at 2100Z-0200Z. NAM sends PX on 14345. [thanks info - Ed.]

Reader Lawrence D. Kelsey writes in to send more SASE'S, and to tell us that he appreciates PROCOMM's alternate viewpoints. Thanks for the extra stamped envelopes for my use.

Gerrit Veenhof, the new manager of WMH writes "As you know WMH is open from 0700 to 1900 local time daily. At this moment we have three radio operators (all 1st class licenses), Hilda Egner, John Anderson, and myself. John and I maintain the transmitters, which are located some 80 miles from Baltimore, in Cambridge, MD. As of April 1st 1987, our affiliation was terminated by RCA, who used to do our billing. Since that time we found a company to do our billing in New Jersey. We have lowered our rates from 1.05 GF to 1.00 GF and might go lower if we build traffic. We are trying to provide better service to ships by sending overseas telegrams direct to the addressee, where before RCA would deliver all our overseas traffic. Also, we have begun to send a weather report twice a day at 1230 and 2030 UTC. I am considering installing Sitor like WPD has, but no concrete plans yet. I would like to mention that WMH is looking for an radio operator with a 3rd class Telegraph license or higher. I find your newsletter most interesting and will keep you up-to-date about further developments at WMH." [Readers interested in the Morse position at WMH may contact Mr. Veenhof directly at (301) 268-3700 - Ed.]

RCA RATE INCREASE?

According to an RCA GLOBCOM source, RCA is seeking rate increases on telegrams



and telexes at SAN FRANCISCO RADIO/KPH, but not at CHATHAM RADIO/WCC. The basis for this increase is stated as a competitive move, to match SAN FRANCISCO RADIO/KFS. ITT's radio charges on a more equal basis. Our source writes that RCA's offering unequal rates for the same service is absurd, and he envisions seeing shipping companies sending traffic via WCC on the Atlantic to ships in the Pacific in an effort to lower costs, while at the same time causing massive delays in passing traffic to these ships. "Radio Officers will be frustrated in chasing traffic at WCC", he writes. Our source also reports that KFS has installed the LANE computer system despite ITT's refusal to do so several months ago when they were originally slated to do so. [LANE computers will enable morse operators to directly copy traffic to telex circuits - Ed.]

SOLAS = SH#T OUT'TA LUCK AT SEA?

Radio Officer Gary Wood writes: "I've been in radio work since 1948 and I feel that (the) SIU/MEBA-2 is making a mistake by trying to erase the RO/REO... The United States is a signatory member of the ITU, which is admittedly trying to replace present rules with new ones (FGMDSS) that will eliminate the rule of standing watch on 500 KHz. But that is all prefaced by the requirement that a ship has a whole hodge-podge of automated radio electronics equipment that will (presumably) replace a full-time watch standing R/O whenever it's implemented. However, I don't know of any vessel that comes close to meeting these rules because the plan has not been accepted by all participants and its implementation cannot be legally brought about by merely pushing ahead without all countries agreeing and signing an acceptable set of rules for safety of life at sea. With the present so-called "state of the art" radio equipment I've been working with, nothing can be relied upon to take the place of a live human radio operator. The Fancy Dams in the steamship companies and other lackeys rushing in to lick their boots to shave money off operating expenses by the elimination of the RO/REO are changing the time honored meaning of SOLAS (Safety Of Life At Sea) to another type of SOLAS: Sh#t Out'ta Luck At Sea. How would (they) like to be sailing a vessel in the green, cold, perilous waters of the North Atlantic ocean around Greenland without a R/O on watch? I'll not sail another day if I have to go to sea on a vessel without a watch-standing Radio Officer, nor will I sign on as an unlicensed crew member to perpetuate this scam. With the recent antics from MEBA D-2 and SMU regarding R/O's, and articles in publications like SOUNDINGS, it leaves me no doubt that there is an ongoing concerted effort to eliminate the American Radio Officer from the scene."

Texaco & Sabine 1 for 1

Al Tschirhart writes in that he and Darwin Campbell as members of Texaco Radio Officers Association executive board, regained the one for one vacation and a "pretty good" salary. He reports that Sabine will regain their one for one about August. Al says he has a copy of a Q&A manual for the telegraph license which he can make copies of if anyone needs it. Write Al at 1907 E. Warren Ave, Victoria TX

R/O Du Mesnil Presents paper at Canadian Coast Guard MSAC Meeting

AMHERST, NS - (Copyright 1987 - PROCOMM) Radio Officers Paul Du Mesnil and Spud Roscoe (now working at HALIFAX COAST GUARD RADIO/UCS) presented a paper at the Canadian Coast Guard Marine Safety Advisory Committee on 15 April 1987. The Committee is comprised of ship owners, officials of the Department of Communications (DOC), officials of the Ship Safety Board of the Coast Guard (Ministry of Transport), of the Fisheries, of the Commercial fishermen, and other interested parties. It was the largest group which had ever met at a MSAC meeting in the Maritime Province. Declarations made by DOC officials at the meeting immediately prior to MR. Du Mesnil's presentation, according to Mr. Spud Roscoe, "left little doubt that 'R/O's in Canada are doing too little too late'". Wries Du Mesnil: "Our days are numbered on Merchant ships (as being required by the ship station radio regulations (SSRR) and Ship Station Technical Regulations (SSTR) as they have been amended to reflect the views of the members of the International Maritime Organization, (IMO), who have been strongly advocating the use of only 2182 KHz and UHF 16 for ship-to-ship communications in distress, urgency, and safety situations in the GMDSS (Global Marine Distress and Signaling System). The ship owners who have been strongly pressing the Government of Canada over the last 15-20 years to get rid of the Radio Officers are indeed winning the battle."

"Ship owners are insisting on shore side maintenance and back-up equipment aboard ship," continues Du Mesnil, "thus eliminating any possibility of having aboard a person holding a Class I Technical Certificate. They want strictly Deck and Engineering Officers aboard their ships. Q: Already, Canadian ships of over 1599 grt are allowed to sail anywhere in the world, on 'occasional voyages' if they have SATCOM and MF/HF SSB without a Radio Officer or W/T equipment! 'Occasional voyages' are described by our Coast Guard as six months less one day in the course of a 12-month period! Quite a few large bulk-carriers are doing exactly that. One in particular, M/V NANTICOKE, was allowed to make a voyage from Sydney, Nova Scotia to Japan and return to the East Coast of Canada last December without a R/O."

Mr Du Mesnil continues his story about the Radio Officer in Canada... "Maybe I'm sticking my head in the sand thinking the Navy will always insist in having a person dedicated to comms on the research ship 'QUEST', which is designed to carry out research and development of acoustical submarine detection systems. I am slated to take over the R/O's job here in September 1987 when her regular R/O of 19 years retires at that time. He's been a board since she was built in 1969. I'm here training under him. Comms are still done in Morse with CFH. We do not yet have RTTY, but that is coming and when SATCOM is installed I really don't know if they'll keep me aboard or not. It's a frightening thought when I have a 9 year old boy and a little girl of 19 months! They (the Navy) won't even send me on electronics courses to upgrade my maintenance capabilities."

Maybe I'll have to make a decision as to my future within the next few years. I've tried other jobs in the past but I've never really been very happy with any of them. I shipping agent, Vessel Traffic Regulator, aeradio operator at airports without a control tower, weather observer, coast station operator etc. I'm really limited at what I can do, and and to change careers in my 40's (I'm 40 now) is difficult. Before I forget: remember my article about removing the R/O's on HUDSON/CGDG and BAFFIN/CGDL? Yesterday I monitored a SOS on 500 KHz from a bulker, M/V SKIPPER 1/3EBK4 which was about 420 miles North of us and about 300 miles South of St. John's NFLD. It just happened that HUDSON/CGDG was the closest vessel to it: but it COULD NOT communicate with 3EBK4 on 500 KHz because of having removed her Radio Officer a few months

ago. A rescue aircraft "Rescue 117" on its way to the scene had to supply info (received from Rescue Co-ordination Centre) to HUDSON/CGDG who had seemed to have gotten the location of the stricken ship wrong either on the Radio-telephone rebroadcasts from Canadian coast stations, or from SATCOM. There was confusion and the comms on 2182 KHz between the aircraft R117 and HUDSON/CGDG were very poor. When Halifax Coast Guard Radio/UCS, unable to hear either HUDSON or R117 using 2182 made a call up for a regular marine information broadcast, UCS completely obliterated R117's comms, and it had to be resent. After much confusion, the HUDSON did reach the SKIPPER 1/3EBK4 and took her crew aboard. Now, for certain, the Canadian Authorities will use this example of a so-called magnificent rescue" by a Canadian ship equipped with SATCOM and Radio-telephone only to justify their actions."

"What, obviously, they won't mention is that comms would have been much more efficient if HUDSON/CGDG could have contacted 3EBK4 directly on 500 KHz. Just watch the newspapers, the AMVER BULLETIN, even READER'S DIGEST in the next few months for some political twisting of events."

In my speech I mentioned such incidents as the fire onboard the passenger ship PRINSENDAM/PJTA which used the SATCOM, and was left on the line with a dumb-founded hospital orderly, when 2182 SSB voice was tried, only one fishing vessel answered, but when 500 KHz was used ships over the entire Pacific Ocean responded, and coast stations in San Francisco copied the SOS comms. This was the first of my documented SATCOM failures. Secondly, to quote the words of the R/O who was onboard the British ship ST HELENA during its fire in the latter part of 1984: [quoted from SIGNAL 1/86 -

Ed.] "The fire aboard ST. HELENA was discovered at 2230... within minutes the engine stopped and all power failed. This left me with only the (500 KHz W/T) Emergency Transmitter. But the few minutes they got the emergency generator going which gave me power again. But the few minutes it had been off was sufficient to upset the Gyro Compass to the extent that the dish (SATCOM Aerial) off the satellite. Apart from that all other information necessary for the satellite terminal had been lost during the power cut. Shortly after the emergency generator choked on the smoke and stopped leaving me again with only the Emergency Transmitter when I was told to put out a distress call [on morse code - Ed.] ... This was answered by OVERSEAS ARGONAUT about 25 miles distant and the American ship KITTANNING at about 80 miles. Both were alerted by [500 KHz morse] Auto Alarm. It was several hours before I was able to get the SATCOM back on again due to the wandering gyro and even then it wouldn't have brought such an immediate response as the old proved 500 KHz systems did."

The third example is of a tanker in the Gulf of Aden: [from SIGNAL 3/84- Ed.] "The Panamanian tanker TESUBU II reported by satellite to its owners in London that it was taking on water forward due to heavy seas and was heading for Socotra. Contact was then lost. No Urgency or Distress message was sent on 500 KHz. The EASTERN VALLEY had sighted a tanker down by the head at 1500 Local Time and had tried to contact her on VHF with no result. Since the tanker was proceeding at slow speed in the opposite direction (towards Socotra) the EASTERN VALLEY's officers were not unduly alarmed... The Radio Officer did not know of the URGENCY until 1100 LT on the 27th when PORTISHEAD RADIO made an Urgent Broadcast. At about the same time the Norwegian flag GOLAR FROST received the urgency message from "EIK" Coast Earth Station and proceeded to the last known position of the TESUBU II. A search was conducted but without result, 17-1/2 hours too late. A distress call on 500 KHz [Morse -Ed.] would have given virtually immediate assistance."